
Pentagon Planning Five Regional Teams Under United States Africa Command Framework

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Much of the work for United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), the United States (U.S.) military's newest geographic command, likely will be done by five teams, each deployed to and designed for a specific region of the continent. The plans for these "regional integration teams" are still being laid, but Pentagon officials want a "split-based, tailored presence" there, not a one-size-fits-all approach that might produce dividends in one region but chaos in another, according to Department of Defense (DoD) documents prepared in mid-September 2007.

One team will go to the northern, eastern, southern, central and western portions of the continent, mirroring the African Union's five regional economic communities, the briefing documents say. The idea is to "establish regional presence on the African continent which would facilitate appropriate interaction with existing Africa political-military organizations," one of the September 14, 2007 briefings says. The regional teams will link to African Union (A.U.) organizations, "Africa stand-by force brigade headquarters [and] U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) support hubs," according to the slides.

The *Defense News* obtained a copy of the DoD documents, which offer a window into the Pentagon's planning of the much-anticipated new command. Several Africa scholars said the regional approach the Pentagon apparently is taking should be a good fit in a complex place like Africa.

"The teams fit with the reality that peacekeeping is done on a regional basis," said Steve Morrison of the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies. If the area-specific team members become experts,

. . . they will be able to relate to those places and really develop a regional approach. . . . It's a good way to begin establishing a greater presence in the region.

Perhaps most importantly, the teams will give U.S. policy-makers a direct link with multinational African organizations involved in policy and security efforts, Morrison said.

"That is how the A.U. is organized," said Brett Schaefer, a fellow at the Washington-based Heritage foundation, "so makes sense to mirror the A.U."

- One team will have responsibility for a northern strip from Mauritania to Libya
- The second team will operate in a block of east African nations - Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, Kenya, Madagascar and Tanzania
- The third will carry out activities in a large southern block that includes South Africa, Zimbabwe and Angola
- The fourth team would concentrate on a group of central African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Congo

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- The fifth regional team would focus on a western block that would cover Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Niger and Western Sahara

Schaefer said the command must be based on African soil, though others believe differently.

The teams will contain planners, “area experts,” health capabilities, and command and control systems, though more details remain to be fixed, the documents said. The area-specific teams will “direct and facilitate” organizations the Pentagon will dub “offices of security cooperation,” according to the slides. After nearly two decades of talk in Washington about creating a new military command for all things Africa, the Bush administration in early February 2007 finally formally announced the organization would soon be a reality.

Africa Command will enhance our efforts to bring peace and security to the people of Africa and promote our common goals of development, health, education, democracy and economic growth in Africa, President Bush said February 7, 2007.

The administration has set AFRICOM planning on a course to hit initial operational capability by October 1, 2007, with the larger goal of having a fully functioning command by October 1, 2008. Ward’s organization will take responsibility for a continent that previously was split between three U.S. military regional outfits:

- U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). CENTCOM will oversee American activities in Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya
- U.S. European Command (EUCOM). The European organization is in charge of managing things across the remainder of the continent
- U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM). PACOM is responsible for Madagascar, the Seychelles and the part of the Indian Ocean just off the East African coast

The new outfit will have substantially more than a military mission. The Administration and Pentagon officials continue to stress AFRICOM officials will primarily work on diplomatic, developmental, economic and security projects. To that end, they stress its deputy commander for civil-military activities as well as the AFRICOM commander’s top foreign policy adviser both will be Department of State officials.

The U.S. has a number of strategic reasons for devoting an entire regional command to the troubled continent, experts said this week. For Washington, pushing responsible governance, ensuring access to certain natural resources, especially oil and engaging areas that lack governance and could become staging grounds for terrorists is important, regional experts said. Additionally, several experts agreed the Bush administration has done a poor job explaining to African governments exactly what AFRICOM will do.

“They have created a lot of confusion among many African governments,” Schaefer said. The murky message from Washington has essentially “focused [aid efforts and other tasks] traditionally done by other agencies through a strictly military lens, so African officials view this as something else.” “It should be much more clear just what AFRICOM is going to do,” Schaefer said. Administration officials should step up efforts to make clear to regimes across the continent that the command will not be charged with “making all U.S. policy with regards to Africa,” he said.

Not all of the new American presence will have a permanent home on the continent, however. Some functions that could be deployed to Africa but which cannot be located on the continent will be based elsewhere, according to the slides. With the initial operational capability date only weeks away, a U.S. transition team, composed of 80 military and 20 civilian personnel, is working out of Kelly Barracks in Stuttgart, Germany. Morrison praised the transition team, saying it has been

stacked with the Pentagon's "best and brightest" up-and-coming officers. That team is attempting to complete a list of difficult tasks, including:

- Refining mission requirements
- Drawing up a list of possible nations where the AFRICOM headquarters might be based
- Determining how many personnel and resources it will take to run the command
- Tweaking the headquarters organization and overall structure
- Crafting a plan to transfer "mission sets" from the U.S. commands that now have a hand in Africa

The emerging plans are not yet set in stone. Officials working on AFRICOM planning still expect to get additional direction from Defense Secretary on "structure and basing."